

Running Head: THE ROLE OF MILITARY HISTORY

The Role of Military History

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Class #59

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20 April 2009

*could be a good essay but has difficulty making examples relevant to the thesis*

## THE ROLE OF MILITARY HISTORY

**Thesis Statement:** Military professionals must read and understand military history in order to reduce the application of past errors.

**Introduction:** Although the history of the <sup>u</sup> ~~united~~ <sup>s</sup> ~~states'~~ military only spans a few hundred years, there are many events throughout its span that we as Soldiers ought to learn from.

### I. Manifest Destiny versus Dispersion

- A. Colonists
- B. Continental Army
- C. The Civil War
- D. Brigadier General Randolph Marcy
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- G. Iraq

### II. Modernization of tactics and equipment

- A. The American Civil War
- B. The Korean War
- C. Warfare in the Middle East

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- C. Capitalism
- D. Communism
- E. Imperialism

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Abstract

Military history provides us a vast amount of information that we can use to base future decisions on. Mistakes that have been made in the past are often identified through history. History can help professional Soldiers ~~to~~ avoid mistakes that were made in the past. The decision to disperse Soldiers too thin has been shown to have devastating effects. Additionally, ignoring advancements in technology or tactics have proven to be detrimental on the battlefield. Finally, trying to change a countries' ideology can be very difficult. The difficulty in changing an ideology is compounded by the current ideology and by the amount of resources necessary to effectively change it.

## The Role of Military History

As we review history, we can find that there are often mistakes made that mostly likely could have been avoided. Some chapters of our history may appear as mistakes, but were actually calculated risk in which the American government decided to take a certain amount of risk in order to focus monies, or other material and means, towards other efforts. Evidently, it would be difficult for any government to manage to reduce all risk and not make mistakes. However, understanding the events that have taken place in the past could shed light into some of the decisions that are made at or above the strategic level. This additional knowledge could also aid the American professional Soldier in making decisions.

### *Manifest Destiny versus Dispersion*

Expansion is one of the United States' greatest <sup>Factors in</sup> ~~features~~ to economic development. This has held true ever since the formation of the New World. Unfortunately, there have been many incidents where expansion has come at a cost, and most of the defending nations have the same viewpoint as Abraham Lincoln did back in 1837:

From whence shall we expect the approach of danger? Shall some transatlantic giant step the earth and crush us with a blow? No never all the armies of Europe and Asia could not by force take a sip from the Ohio river or make a track on the blue ridge mountains. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of free men, we will live forever or die by suicide.

source?

*Colonists.* Having looked back at the colonization of America and Britain's domination of the New World, we can see how the colonists' exposure while mobilized to fight for the British is <sup>comparable</sup> ~~comparative~~ to those <sup>the insurgents in</sup> ~~indigenous~~ of Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq, trained recruits were getting killed at outposts that we put under their control. This was a problem predominately once we

gave entire control of the outpost to the newly trained force. In many areas, we changed our tactics by continuing to have a coalition force present in order to provide security for these outposts. The viewpoint from many Soldiers was that the newly trained force could not secure their own posts due to a lack of discipline, apathy, and other similarities that the British also identified during their colonization.

*Continental Army.* The Continental Army was able to outnumber the British detachments once they became isolated. As a result the British were reluctant to disperse their Soldiers too thin. However, we know that an occupying force must provide a constant presence in order to support the new government. Therefore, the key is to know the appropriate size of each outpost to maintain force superiority. The ability to properly calculate future disbursements is also vital in order to make sure that there are enough reserves to continue disbursing to outposts and to continue expansion.

*The Civil War.* On 21 July, 1861, due to political pressure, Brigadier General McDowell was defeated at the First Battle of Bull Run. He went into battle with a finite number of poorly trained Soldiers <sup>who</sup> that were available for a finite amount of time. Ironically, a year later, fear of dispersion led the politicians to keep General McDowell's 40,000 Soldiers in Washington to defend against Stonewall Jackson. This decision resulted with Major General McClellan's forces being outnumbered by the <sup>combination</sup> culmination of General Johnston's and General Lee's forces during the Seven Days Battle.

*Brigadier General Randolph Marcy.* General Marcy fought in the Mexican War at the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma as a Captain. His recollection of the pitfalls of over dispersion and other tactics were published in *The Prairie Traveler* (2004).

*explain!*

*World War I.* One of the contributing factors to the Germans being defeated in 1918 was that they had exhausted their reserves. A massive war that lasted almost five years, Germany could not hold all fronts and continue to advance once Allied Forces entered the war.

*Korea.* Task Force Smith was a fairly small Task Force that was ordered to keep the North Koreans from gaining southern territory. This over-dispersal of Soldiers also contributed to the failure of the mission. Although the force was ill trained and ill equipped, the Soldiers were also over-dispersed.

*Iraq.* As in other wars, Iraq is vast in size and our forces have been fighting a drawn out war. Instead of large formations on the battlefield, we have small clusters of troops hunting down small groups of insurgents. This battlefield snapshot could give the insurgency the ability to wait until we over-disperse our Soldiers and possibly gain the tactical advantage.

#### *Modernization of tactics and equipment*

There have been many examples throughout our history that we have neglected to improve our tactics along with technology. Likewise, we have also failed to improve our equipment after gaining tactical knowledge. Ongoing efforts should continue to be focused on both aspects so that the United States retains military superiority within the world.

*The American Civil War.* During the Mexican American war, the introduction of artillery became a significant advantage. The usage of flying columns of artillery broke the lines of infantry men and resulted with the infantry Soldier having less of an impact. However, during the American Civil War, further advances in technology brought a crucial change to the way battles were fought. With the introduction of the Model 1841 rifles, Soldiers were able to fire 500 yards rather than the 100 yards the musket fired. As a result, they were able to engage <sup>artillery</sup> canisters at twice the distance. <sup>as before</sup> This not only reduced the effects of the canisters, but also

changed the approach of the riflemen. The introduction of the Springfield Model 1861 extended the range to 1000 yards, pushing the artillery <sup>still further</sup> back to be used primarily as defense. Since tactics didn't change with technology, over 660,000 died in the Civil War.

Major General Emory Upton's trench warfare changed tactics and took the advantage away from the Confederates. General Upton's knowledge was further developed when General William Sherman sent him to on a tour to Europe and Asia to study other countries' armies. This resulted <sup>in</sup> with a further change in tactics and doctrine that wasn't properly acknowledge for several years (Upton, 2009) <sup>pp?</sup>. This in itself is another lesson learned in which after action reviews (AARs) and other documents ought to be properly reviewed to check their relevancy to current operations.

*The Korean War.* During the Korean War, Task Force Smith was quickly deployed from Japan to Korea. Similar to Brigadier General McDowell's Soldiers during the Civil War, The Soldiers of Task Force Smith were not properly trained. More importantly, they had the technology and equipment to defeat the opposing Korean forces, but they failed to bring modern weaponry with them. In this instance, technology was not being utilized and tactics had not been properly mastered by the Soldiers.

*Warfare in the Middle East.* Many of the above lessons have been properly applied to current operations in the Middle East. Although there is an adaptive enemy, American forces have been able to change tactic, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) and weaponry as rapidly as the enemy change theirs. There has been an abundant effort to properly equip Soldiers and to ensure they have the most advanced equipment available. Separate emphasis has been placed on tactics, but both tactics and equipment have predominantly been complementary throughout the war.

?  
3.5" rocket  
launcher?

need some  
examples  
here

*Educating a subjugated country, or educating the conquer?*

Of particular significance is how conquering forces have, for the most part, imposed their way of thinking <sup>on</sup> the subjected country. Whether it be an expansion by military or economic means, America has mainly imposed its ideology upon other countries. Often we attempt to quickly impose our type of government and ideology, but many countries either lack political education, or have no strong desire to change to a specific ideology - especially quickly. However, many of our past and present adversaries have had (or have) forms of government and ideologies that have common threads with ours that could be used to bind the countries together. Having tolerance and patience is crucial in order for these binds to take effect.

*Knowing your subjects.* We often talk about winning the minds of the people, <sup>who</sup> ~~which~~ typically are our adversaries. A way to accomplish this is to better understand their culture and their ideology. In *The Ugly American* (1999) the character John Colvin is helped by a local native ~~with whom he is able to befriend~~. Colvin's understanding of the local culture and language helped him partner with the other character named Deong. Together, they achieve many of Colvin's assigned missions. Unfortunately, Deong eventually embraced communism, which resulted with Colvin nearly being killed. regardless of the odd ending, it is remarkable to note that Colvin was able to befriend Deong because of his culture awareness, assimilating into Deong's culture.

*Longevity.* Despite the efforts that Major General Leonard Wood placed in Cuba, the local populous was not able to accept such change at the pace America wanted it to. As a result, none of the changes lasted, which was evident when the local government and infrastructure collapsed. <sup>when?</sup>

As a Major, Lieutenant General Robert Bullard went to the Philippines and successfully conducted noncombat and combat operations. He became knowledgeable of the land, learned the language, and became the military governor of Mindanao. Although General Bullard was successful by improving their lifestyle, the hearts and minds of the people were never won and the United States abruptly left in 1913.

*Capitalism.* Although there are several forms of capitalism, capitalism is a system where wealth is owned by the public sector. This is one of the leading factors that contribute towards healthy competition and typically keeps supply and demand balanced. Even Karl Marx's notion of the capitalist mode of production is characterized as a system of primarily private ownership of the means of production in a mainly market economy with a legal framework on commerce and a physical infrastructure provided by the state (Flank, 2007).

*Communism.* Communism also has a few different forms, and is considered to be a branch of socialism. However, its structure is geared more towards a stateless and classless society that is based on common ownership. Although Karl Marx has been credited as being the founder of it, the modern form of Communism is relatively destructive and typically causes a government and economy to implode. This distractive feature, along with contradictory ideologies causes grave challenges when trying to bind another country.

*Imperialism.* Although imperialism commonly has a negative connotation when used, modern imperialism can be defined as the belief in the desirability of the acquisition of colonies and dependencies, (or the extension of a country's influence through trade and diplomacy.) ?

Historically, imperialism has be associated with the policy of direct extension of sovereignty and dominion over non-contiguous and often distant overseas territories, it also denotes indirect political or economic control of powerful states over weaker peoples.

Regarded also as a doctrine based on the use of deliberate force, imperialism has been subject to moral censure by its critics, and thus the term is frequently used in international propaganda as a pejorative for expansionist and aggressive foreign policy (Louis, 1978).

### Conclusion

Despite the infancy of the United States, we are already able to extract informative bits of history that are applicable to multiple combat scenarios. The few that I have mentioned can be tied together to bring awareness to the <sup>relevance</sup> ~~relativity~~ of history to members of the armed forces. Some of the lessons learned were to not disperse Soldiers too thin. Modernization of equipment and tactics should both be synchronized in order to assure an equilibrium of force. The delicate task of converging a country into a new ideology can be both daunting and resource depleting. Soldiers' lives, money, and time are some of the valuable resources expended during such undertaking. (Yet, to make decisions based solely on history would be a tragic mistake as I've pointed out in various parts of this paper.) This is also duly noted with Mark Twain's quote: where?

The cat, having sat upon a hot stove lid, will not sit upon a hot stove lid again. But he won't sit upon a cold stove lid either. source?

no casualty here (Hence,) military history ought to be studied by all Soldiers, not just professional Soldiers. Knowledge of military history gives us invaluable insight that can be applied either directly or indirectly. A knowledgeable background in military history helps facilitate sound decisions that are based on calculated risk, battlefield awareness, and current tactics.

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